This has certainly been a BIG year for Viewbank College. I consider myself privileged to have been involved in some very exciting developments within the College over the last twelve months. I have also come to appreciate even more how the extraordinary efforts of the College staff, parents, and students are to ensure that Viewbank College remains a sought after college with an excellent reputation within the broader community.

Viewbank College has played host to a large number of visits from politicians over the last twelve months. In May 2014 Mr Martin Dixon, the then Victorian Minister for Education, visited the College to launch the government’s ‘Engaging Parents in Career Conversations’ initiative. Viewbank College had been recommended as a school to launch this Department initiative. A group of parents and students participated in a 20 minute activity and the Minister stayed on to discuss other issues concerning the College.

The College Theatre Project became a catalyst for visits from members of both major Victorian parliamentary parties. The project had been identified as part of a Buildings & Grounds Master Plan and it was considered that the best opportunity to secure funding for the project was during an election year. In July 2014 the College was visited by Mr Anthony Carbines, local Labor member for Ivanhoe; Mr Daniel Andrews, Leader of the Opposition and Mr James Merlino, Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Following this visit, the Labor Party announced, if it was to be elected, that it would contribute an amount of $11.5m towards building the new performing arts centre, music classrooms and administration facilities.

The visit from the Labor Party was followed up by an unexpected visit in October 2014 by the Premier of Victoria, Dr Denis Napthine and Mr Carl Ziebell, local Liberal candidate for Ivanhoe. The Premier and Carl Ziebell had a walk around the College before heading to the Library to address a small group of students. Without any prior notification the Premier announced that his government, if re-elected, would pledge $13m towards the College Theatre Project.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Judith and her team in managing the lobbying process through this important time. Numerous meetings with local council members, local politicians, and the meetings above ensured the College had a significant funding commitment for the project regardless of the election outcome. The hard work starts now in making sure the pledged amount is incorporated into the Government Budget and commencement of the detailed planning for delivery of the project.

I was also fortunate enough to be invited to attend the Viewbank College ANZAC Day Assembly and lay a wreath on behalf of the College at the base of the College flagpole. This Assembly was organised by the Year 12 Leadership Team and was carried out in a very dignified and respectful manner. The external guests, Mr Anthony Carbine, local Member of the Victorian Parliament, and two members of Watsonia RSL, Mr Edward Fressard and Mr Jim Stephen, were also involved in the Assembly and provided compliments to the College and its students on how this special day was honoured.
I had the honour of hosting the Viewbank College Presentation Ball at The Centre, Ivanhoe on Saturday 9th August. Prior to the big night I had attended a number of dance rehearsals and it was great to see all of the hard work come together resulting in a special night for the 22 debutantes and their partners. A special thank you to Lynette Matthew, her daughter Catherine, Year 11 Well-Being Leader, Samantha Sissons and dance teacher, Helen Burnett for the hours of work leading up to the night to ensure it was a huge success.

I also attended the Year 12 Valedictory Dinner on 21st November. I delivered a welcoming speech, congratulating students on completing their secondary schooling, commending parents on the support they provided to their child and the College and acknowledging the dedication of the Viewbank College teaching staff through the students’ journey. The night recognised winners of various student achievement awards and celebrated the achievement of all Year 12 students in completing their VCE Certificate.

Another highlight was the Year 12 Leadership Group presentations to the College Council. This evening provided the Year 12 leaders with the opportunity to present on their area of responsibility and the activities that had taken place throughout the year. The Year 12 leaders also provided College Council with suggestions for areas of improvement in and around the College which provides Council with good information from the students’ perspective.

The College again excelled in the Arts. The College Production of ‘Hairspray’ was an outstanding success with sell-out performances in July/August. This was followed later in the year by the successful Junior Production ‘Attack of the Zombies’. On the music side the ever-popular Autumn Brunch and Autumn Night were well attended as was the Jazz Night at Watsonia RSL and the Gala Concert. A big thank you to the Friends groups who spend an enormous amount of time ensuring these and other events are delivered to such a high standard and raise funds that are reinvested in the Arts programmes or the College.

The College Council also hosted a Community Focus Evening in July 2014 which was well attended by over 100 teachers, parents and students. The evening focussed on student reports, the Vocational Pathways Program and the introduction of 1:1 Personal Learning Devices. This was a successful evening and a great way for members of the College community to have a say in what is happening within the College.

There were many other developments within the College during the last twelve months including:

- Successful commencement of the 2015 school year in November 2014
- Provision of new relocatables to accommodate the expanding students numbers
- Introduction of 1:1 Portable Learning Devices at Year 7 and Year 10
- New locker bay development proposal
- Planning for shade sails in Year 7 area

Whilst this list is not exhaustive it does highlight areas of change within the College that have taken place with the involvement of College Council. The College Council
and its sub-committees have worked hard throughout the twelve months towards improving the College environment and providing students with better learning opportunities. I would like to thank all Councillors for their contribution during the twelve months and commend you on a job well done.

Viewbank College is a strong College:

- it has a strong enrolment with Year 7 applications far exceeding available places
- it has a strong and committed teaching staff who spend many hours over and above their standard teaching obligations to provide students with the best possible learning environment and outcomes
- a strong parent group who contribute through College Council and its sub-committees, Friends groups and volunteering their time to assist the College in other ways
- a strong student leadership program with students willing to take on additional responsibilities in addition to their learning workload

This strength, through all levels of the College, ensures it remains highly regarded within learning circles and amongst the wider community.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Viewbank College Council for electing me as your College Council President for 2014/2015. It is a role I took on with some apprehension knowing that at times, I would be pushed beyond my comfort zone. Nevertheless, I knew that we were entering into an exciting period and I was enthusiastic about playing a larger part in the future of this great College. I was certainly not let down on both fronts!

Damian Schulz
College Council President
March, 2015